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Józef Stala

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland

Jadranka Garmaz

University of Split, Croatia

The Family *Communio Personarum* and Upbringing

Abstract

Not only are marriage and the family, natural and religious institutions but, above all, they are communities of persons fulfilling their personal calling. However, *communio personarum* does not only result from the natural relations, but is a consequence of faith, which unites family with Jesus Christ. This article will present the pedagogical consequences of acknowledging the family as *communio personarum*, including the fact that every family is a privileged place of upbringing and parents, who bestowed the gift of life upon their child, have been gifted with a wealth of upbringing skills. The marital relation, as a “me” and “you” relation, constitutes the foundation for other family relations, as well as the everyday educational support for the child. Parents, however, accompany their children in forming their mature personality and religiousness.

Keywords

marriage, family, community, *communio personarum*, parents, upbringing.

The everyday task of rearing children, in the family, poses a considerable challenge for many families. Indeed, they recognise not only the truth about their calling but also realistically experience their own weaknesses. Under such circumstances, the Church, which is constantly aware of the weakness and limitations of human persons but which also knows the truth about their greatness,

supports families in their upbringing activities. The Church also believes in the potential present in the person, family ties and the entire family community.¹ However, the faith in the family, shown by the Church, is related to the difficult, everyday journey undertaken by the family, as it is in line with its identity. Hence, the Church invariably calls families to invoke, witness and build the unity of this community. This article will address issues related to the family as *communio personarum*. First, the family community will be portrayed as a natural environment for upbringing, then, the notion of *communio personarum* will be explained and finally, personal family relations and upbringing assumptions resulting from *communio personarum* will be illustrated.

1. Family community as a natural environment for upbringing

The contemporary civilization, shaping our society, focuses primarily on progress, science, technology, digitalization and production. Its main goal is not the happiness of the person but the quantity and quality of goods. The contemporary world of new technologies is becoming increasingly more inhumane as it rejects the person and deprives him of any reference to other people by rejecting the spiritual world. A consequence of the destruction of social life is the general father-figure crisis, social relations distortion and dramatic degradation of the so-called “intellectual elite”, who frequently present no moral standards themselves but strive hard to impose their moral norms and customs on society. A further effect of this “oblivion” of man, as it were, is the deepening crisis of upbringing. Thus, there is a felt need for the return to the natural environment of upbringing – the family.²

¹ Cf. A. Potocki, *Wychowanie religijne w polskich przemianach. Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne*, Warszawa 2007; J.K. Przybyłowski, *Funkcja wychowawcza w teorii i praktyce eklezjalnej. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne*, Warszawa 2010; *Focus on Family and Education*, ed. E. Osewska, Split 2016; *The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2015; *Religious Education / Catechesis in the Family. A European Perspective*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warszawa 2010; E. Osewska, J. Stala, *W kierunku katechezy rodzinnej*, Kielce 2003; J. Garmaz – A. Gašpar, *Education for Mercy – Comparative Analysis of the Pontifical Discourses (Mercy is lifestyle, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation)*, in: J. Garmaz – A. Čondić (eds.), *Challenges to Religious Education in Contemporary Society*, Vol 2 No 2 (2017): International scientific conference proceedings, pp. 56-72.

² Cf. *Wychowanie a wyzwania ponowoczesności*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2011.

Upbringing may take place in a variety of ways. However, it is the family environment that seems to guarantee the highest effectiveness.³ Among manifold factors affecting this process, a significant role is played by the character of the functioning of the family community itself. Being a unique community, i.e. personal community – *communio personarum*, the family inherently constitutes a privileged place for upbringing. Therefore, even when a family does not exhibit high moral standards, or is not fully adequate, by virtue of the structure itself, it may constitute a better environment for life and education for its children than other, specialized educational and caregiving institutions.⁴ It is a consequence of the fact that it was parents who gave life to their child and welcomed him in the atmosphere of love and who are endowed with such upbringing talents that are absent in other persons. Only parents know their own children completely, in all of their uniqueness and can show mysterious amounts of personal love.⁵ The reason behind this are the ties, impossible to imitate in the conditions of another environment, which bind all the family members and are essential for maintaining their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.⁶ No other existing social tie is, by nature, marked with so solid, basic foundations as the family ties. The natural communion-community relation, typical only for family, is a unique system that cannot be substituted with something else. The entire inner force present within the institution of family may withstand and overcome a lot. Still, it does not mean that it cannot be weakened or destroyed due to the profound influence of external factors.⁷

³ Cf. *Rodzina i edukacja w zmaganiu o przyszłość Europy*, ed. E. Osewska, Tarnów 2016; *Rodzina – bezcenny dar i zadanie*, eds. J. Stala, E. Osewska, Radom 2006.

⁴ Cf. J. Bajda, *Powołanie małżeństwa i rodziny*, Łomianki 2010; J. Stala, *Familienkatechese in Polen um die Jahrhundertwende. Probleme und Herausforderungen*, Tarnów 2008; *Zagrożenia w wychowaniu i socjalizacji młodzieży oraz możliwości ich przezwyciężania*, ed. T. Sołtysiak, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 116; H. Cudak, *Socjalizacja i wychowanie we współczesnych rodzinach polskich*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2001, p. 209; S. Kawula, *Kształty rodziny współczesnej*, Toruń 2005, p. 63.

⁵ Cf. Papieska Rada ds. Rodziny, *Ludzka płciowość: prawda i znaczenie*, Łomianki 1996, Nr 7; *Strengthening Families*, eds. J. Stala, J. Garmaz, Kraków 2016.

⁶ Cf. A. Doboszyńska, *Zagrożenia zdrowia i życia rodziny*, in: *W trosce o rodzinę. W poszukiwaniu prawdy, dobra i piękna*, eds. M. Ryś, M. Jankowska, Warszawa 2007, p. 269-270.

⁷ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Rodzicielstwo a communio personarum*, „Ateneum kapłańskie” 67 (1975) nr 1, p. 17-31; K. Wojtyła, *Rodzina jako communio personarum*, „Ateneum kapłańskie” 66 (1974) nr 83, p. 347-361; K. Wojtyła, *Rozważania pastoralne o rodzinie*, „Roczniki Nauk Społecznych” (1975), t. 3, p. 59-76; K. Wojtyła, *U podstaw odnowy. Studium o realizacji Vaticanum II*, Kraków

Family remains an existential horizon, as it were, even for those who choose a life of solitude. Ties between particular family members are, predominantly, of the personal, intimate and warm nature, and the solidarity stemming from them is intuitively selfless. Interpersonal bonds within the family are characterized by spontaneity and striving towards common goals, though it may not always be entirely clear. The effect of close relations between family members is the blending of certain individualities into a community, or even a union – in such a way that the personality of each family member is experienced by the whole family, and the development of this personality is regarded as its collective goal. A person, by feeling lonely or lost, may fully find oneself in the family community, at home, which is his own home, a place completely different from all the other places.⁸

Not only are marriage and family natural and religious institutions but, most notably, they are communities of persons fulfilling their personal calling within them. This environment of life, therefore, deserves to be referred to as *communio personarum*, a notion of great depth and significance.⁹ Family is regarded as the home of man coming from God and created of love.¹⁰ The family bond retains its distinctive profile as *communio personarum* by being deeply rooted in the personal bond, constituted by acts of love owed to every person by the virtue of being a personal subject.¹¹ On account of simply existing, a family is a collection of personal relations that bind persons making up the family or community, which come to life thanks to parenthood. Family and marriage are not just an institution, nor a system of authority, which constitutes the institution. In the case of the family, personal relations are significant since *communio* allows for a distinctive kind of participation, a state of entrusting one person to the other.

1972; K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1986; K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Kraków 2000; K. Wojtyła, *Wspólnota ludzka w oczach Soboru*, „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 22 (1979) nr 1-3, p. 5-12.

⁸ Cf. *Gratissimam sane* 2; A. Polnik-Klajn, *Rozważania o rodzinie jako specyficznym środowisku wychowawczym oddziaływań interpersonalnych*, in: *Rodzina. Historia i współczesność. Studium monograficzne*, eds. W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik, Kraków 2006, p. 359; *Rodzina w środowisku lokalnym. Pomoc – wsparcie – opieka*, eds. A. Garbarz, B. Szluz, M. Urbańska, W. Walc, Rzeszów 2011.

⁹ Cf. *Gratissimam sane* 7; T. Styczeń, *Człowiek darem. Na marginesie Jana Pawła II teologii ciała*, in: *Z badań nad rodziną*, ed. T. Kukołowicz, Lublin 1984, p. 47-51.

¹⁰ Cf. *Rodzina w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, ed. J. Żukowicz, Kraków 1990.

¹¹ Cf. T. Styczeń, *Urodziłeś się, by kochać*, Lublin 1993, p. 172.

A person is a singular being that both loves and trusts. A person, owing to its existence, is reflected in the relations of love, faith and hope.¹²

The marital relation is grounded in the trust of one person to the other and the constant cherishing of love that is binding them. Love is, thus, not something that was acquired from an external source, for eternity, but rather an active, positive attitude towards another person; wishing good for the person and continually acting for the benefit of that person. Love achieves its full maturity in marriage and parenthood, but its formation ought to begin during childhood and adolescence. The choice of a spouse should be based on mature love and its unceasing cultivation is essential throughout the entire marital and family life.¹³

2. *Communio personarum* in the theological perspective

Certainly, *communio personarum* does not originate merely from natural relations but is, principally, a result of faith, which unites with God. A condition for the mutual devotion in marriage is, first, giving yourself to Jesus Christ.¹⁴ The human “I” is the most easily reaffirmed as a subject only when it turned towards the divine “You”. This truth is also related to the family.¹⁵ The temporariness of human existence reveals the radical gratuitousness of its entire essence. It means that man finds himself, his own “I” and the “I” of another person, only when he finds himself as somebody who should accept himself as a gift from his Personal Giver. Hence, the truth of gift becomes the rule closely determining the personalistic norm as an ethical principle of referring one person to another person. Since the Personal Maker, Himself, decided to create man in this world as an inimitable, personal subject, each man must affirm in another man the same – personal partner. Therefore, the appropriate attitude of each person to the personal subjectivity of another man, and, in the case of marriage – spouse, becomes the most reliable test and indicator of their own bond with the Personal

¹² Cf. M. Gogacz, *Wprowadzenie do etyki chronienia osób*, Warszawa 1995, p. 100.

¹³ M. Braun – Gałkowska, *Rozwój miłości w małżeństwie*, in: *Jak być szczęśliwym w małżeństwie*, ed. I. Kraińska-Rogała, Kraków 1997, p. 100.

¹⁴ Cf. *Gratissimam sane* 13.

¹⁵ Cf. *Gratissimam sane* 4.

Maker. Respect for the other person is, a condition for affirmation and gratitude that is owed to Him for His endowment of personal existence.¹⁶

The whole truth about the community of the family is brought by Jesus Christ – He, who still gives Himself to us by creating the reality, which is His home – the Church. Within the community of the Church, the family home, which fulfils the mission of the Church in its own way, is a place of unique character and an extraordinary charism. It is Jesus Christ who brings to the family life the gift of devoted love, which shapes this community. For this reason, the sources of this family communion should be found anew in God, who is the guarantor of the effectiveness of their efforts.¹⁷

The relation between the love of a man and woman, and their reference to God, is not only metaphorical but it is also a dependency of organic relation on the ontic plane. By following the example of Jesus Christ, marriage becomes the likeness and image of the mystic union of Jesus Christ and the Church. Marriage, by remaining in the original relation to Jesus Christ, constitutes the acceptance of the gift of love and unity coming directly from Himself. Thus, Jesus Christ constitutes marriage, which is endowed with its personal-dialogical relation to Jesus Christ. It should, therefore, be borne in mind that marriage is a place where the redemptive dialogue of Jesus Christ takes visible form. The consequence of the ontological bonds ought to be a concrete existential attitude. The grace bestowed on the spouses through the sacrament of marriage is a real presence of Jesus Christ, who accompanies them throughout their entire life.

¹⁶ Cf. I. Mroczkowski, *Natura osoby ludzkiej. Podstawy tożsamości człowieka*, Płock 2012; *Spór o osobę w świetle klasycznej koncepcji człowieka. Studia i rozprawy*, ed. P.S. Mazur, Kraków 2012; *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, ed. J. Stala, Kraków 2014; J. Stala, *Der Mensch als Person: Die bestimmende Grundlage für Johannes Paul II. in seinem Bild von der Familie*, "The Person and the Challenges" 2 (2012) nr 2, p. 41-59; J. Stala, *Die Transzendenz als bestimmendes Merkmal der Person in der Anthropologie und der Pädagogik Johannes Pauls II.*, "The Person and the Challenges" 2 (2012) nr 1, p. 61-75; J. Stala, *Die Person und die Herausforderungen der Gegenwart im Licht der Nachfolge und der Lehre des Heiligen Vaters Johannes Pauls II.*, "The Person and the Challenges" – ein internationales wissenschaftliches Periodikum, "The Person and the Challenges" 1 (2011) nr 1, p. 13-23; J. Stala, *Punina postojanja osebe – civilizacija ljubavi u kontekstu postmoderne*, "Crkva u svijetu" (2015) nr 3, p. 469-477; T. Styczeń, *Człowiek jako podmiot daru z samego siebie*, in: *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. K. Majdański, t. 2, Warszawa 1990, p. 72-73.

¹⁷ Cf. *Familiaris consortio* 21; *Gaudium et spes* 48; *Lumen Gentium* 41. J. Garmaz – A. Volenik, *Pastoralni i odgojno-katehetski naglasci sedmog i osmog poglavlja posinodalne pobudnice Amoris laetitia*, in: *Obnovljeni život: časopis za filozofiju i religijske znanosti*, Vol.72. (2017.), 1., str. 93-108.

Admittedly, the marital union is shaped by the persons but only through the power of Jesus Christ does it become a truly new reality.¹⁸ While emphasizing the value of the marital and family union, one needs to remember that the family is only endowed but also tasked with marriage, therefore, it becomes a moral obligation.

3. The shaping of family relations

It is worth remembering that the family is a community in which the proper way of common existence is the communion of persons.¹⁹ A wide array of interpersonal references is created within this community, including: engagement, fatherhood–motherhood, filiation, brotherhood. It is through these relations that every person becomes part of the human family, as well as God's family. The family is the principal personal community, which should constitute the foundation of all other social groups. The need for dialogue and openness to another person may be satisfied within the family – a place where every person emerges with all their individuality and uniqueness. Through every encounter between the “I” and “you”, the *communio personarum* respects the subjectivity of every individual human, their transcendence and self-actualization, or even enhances them. Participating in the sense of “being a neighbor” is the archetype and foundation of all other kinds of interpersonal relations.²⁰

The conjugal relation as the “I” and “you” relation builds the foundation for other family relations. The person is able to objectively bestow a gift on another

¹⁸ Cf. *Familiaris consortio* 56; *Obrzędy sakramentu małżeństwa*, Katowice 1986, p. 89; J. Bajda, *Powołanie małżeństwa i rodziny*, in: *Teologia małżeństwa i rodziny*, ed. K. Majdański, Warszawa 1980, V. 1, p. 70-89, p. 129.

¹⁹ John Paul II in his “Letter to families” distinguished between two terms: “communion” and “community”, and indicated that they are similar but not identical. The “communion” concerns the interpersonal relation between “I” and “you”, whereas the “community” seems to go beyond this relation, leaning towards “social group”, in the direction of some kind of “us”. Cf. *Gratissimam sane* 7.

²⁰ Cf. *Familiaris consortio* 15; S. Łastowska, *Komunikacja międzypokoleniowa młodzieży z dorosłymi. Aspekty pedagogiczno-katechetyczne*, in: *Troska Kościoła o współczesną polską młodzież. Zarys problematyki*, ed. A. Offmański, Szczecin 2008, p. 142; J. Stala, *Personalistyczny charakter życia i wychowania rodzinnego*, in: *Dzisiejsze aspiracje katechezy rodzinnej. Problemy i wyzwania*, eds. J. Stala, E. Osewska, Kielce 2005, p. 375.

person, but also to be received as a gift by that person, thus, to be experienced in this way.²¹ The gift of person must, however, be received in a way that a person deserves, i.e. appropriately, with respect to their nature and dignity. Only the mutual bestowment gradually deepens the love of the betrothed, and becomes a new source of reciprocally giving each other, which builds up, with its inner regularity, as it encounters an even stronger receiving of this gift.²² What is particularly important is that the giver and taker stand on the same plane, since by placing trust in each other and respecting the freedom of choice, they are able to overcome even the greatest limitations. Only in the context of communion can the genuine, personal and spiritual development of members of the family community take place, contributing to the tightening and deepening of the ties between them. This development is grounded in the great trust and belief in the personal dignity of all family members. Consequently, it also includes every child who has the right to be born to this world in the community of persons, and to receive tender and due care, as well as integral education.²³

The realisation of love, shaping the attitude of communion, confirmed by continuous acts of affirmation of the other person, constitute the *sine qua non* condition of self-actualization of a person as a person. Hence, if the other person is affirmed only for their self-actualization, then, this act defies love,²⁴ because the act of affirmation of a person occurs on the basis of the truth of the dignity and the value of another person. The selfless gift of oneself is particularly important in the marital alliance, since a man and woman have been created in such a way so as to mutually bestow on each other the exclusive wealth of humanity through their uniqueness. The fact that spouses reciprocally take and give themselves to each other, causes their life together to attain the status of the true *communio personarum*.²⁵ This gift means that a spouse does not

²¹ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Rodzina jako communio personarum*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 83 (1978), p. 349; Jan Paweł II, *Człowiek jest obrazem Boga (audiencja generalna 6 XII 1978)*, in: *Nauczanie papieskie*, t. I, 1978, Poznań-Warszawa 1987, p. 129-130.

²² Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich*, Watykan 1986, p. 58.

²³ Cf. *Familiaris consortio* 26.

²⁴ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich*, Watykan 1986, p. 58.

²⁵ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Rodzina jako communio personarum*, „Ateneum kapłańskie” 66 (1974) nr 395, p. 356-358.

only offer what he possesses but, first and foremost, gives who he is.²⁶ Being such a personal gift entails the marital *communio personarum*, which should not be broken up.²⁷

4. Upbringing assumption resulting from *communio personarum*

All family members, each one according to the gift bestowed upon them, have the grace but also the responsibility to build the true communion of persons, day after day²⁸. Children fulfil it, first, by their presence and then, through respect and obedience to their parents. Parents, however, carry it out by accompanying their children in forming their mature personality and religiousness.²⁹ The principal factor in building such a communion is the educational exchange between parents and children in which everyone gives and receives. The responsibility for building the unity of the family rests with all its members and occurs through mutual respect, love, everyday sacrifice and openness to joy and sorrow.³⁰

The family is an environment in which a child lives, develops and is subject to rearing processes. Children are not their parents' property. However, parents are the first educators of their offspring due to the fact that they gave birth to them. God graces the family with a newly born child but upbringing

²⁶ Cf. T. Styczeń, *Ciało jako znak obrazu Stwórcy*, in: Jan Paweł II. *Męczyzną i niewiastą stworzył. Chrystus odwołuje się do początku*, Lublin 1981, p. 110.

²⁷ Cf. K. Wojacek, *Rodzina w konfrontacji z migracją zarobkową*, in: *Wyjazdy zarobkowe. Szansa czy zagrożenie. Perspektywa społeczno – moralna*, eds. K. Glombik, P. Morciniec, Opole 2005, p. 219.

²⁸ Cf. A. Gašpar – J. Garmaz, *Interrelatedness of Religious Education and Family Analysed Through Key Terminology Extracted from Theological Texts*, in: E. Osewska (ed.), *Focus on Family and Education*, Crkva u svijetu, Split 2016, p. 151-165.

²⁹ Cf. *Redemptor hominis* 10; *Rodzina miejscem integralnego rozwoju i wychowania*, eds. D. Opozda, M. Loyola-Opiela, D. Bis, E. Świdrak, Lublin 2015; *Wychowanie. Pojęcia, procesy, konteksty*, eds. M. Dudzikowa, M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, Gdańsk 2007.

³⁰ Cf. *Familiaris consortio* 21; *Gratissimam sane* 9; *Wychowanie ku wartościom w świetle nauczania Jana Pawła II. Elementy teorii i praktyki*, t. III, ed. K. Chałas, Lublin-Kielce 2006; *Wychowanie w rodzinie. Od bezradności ku możliwościom*, eds. R. Chałupniak, T. Michalewski, E. Smak, Opole 2016; A. Kalus, *Funkcjonowanie systemu rodziny adopcyjnej. Analiza psychologiczna*, Opole 2009.

is initiated within the family³¹. In the family pedagogy, there exists the necessity of employing objective measures, listening to our conscience based on the supernatural sense of faith and referring to the Divine law.³² This kind of conscience best accounts for the person, his value and calling. A child, born in the likeness and image of God, is to be introduced not only to the family and social life but also to the redemptive dimension of Divine pedagogy. Thus, education is focused on the development of the human being in the entirety of their inner truth, freedom and dignity.³³ This is the pedagogical dimension of the dynamism of giving birth to a new person. All the various human dynamics that are subject to upbringing are contained within man. “By teaching what humanity is to their child, [parents] themselves rediscover it and also re-learn it ... and through upbringing, they both take part of His [Divine] fatherly, and also motherly, pedagogy.”³⁴ The process of child rearing is to particularly increase the consciousness of the gift, love, unity and communion experienced during the hardships of everyday. It constitutes humbly accepting the truth of the community of persons and development of every human.

Family is not just a natural and religious institution but, above all, a community of persons fulfilling their personal calling within their marriage or family. The character of functioning of the family community, which constitutes a personal communion – *communio personarum*, entails that every family is a privileged place for upbringing. Parents, who gave life to their child, are endowed with a wealth of upbringing abilities that nobody else possesses. At the same time, responsibility for the child motivates parents, if the mother and father wish to be wise educators for their own children, to look after their marital relations and continual formation of the family bond by consolidating it in the personal bond, constituted with acts of love. Both, the formation of community of persons as well as upbringing are demanding processes. It is of great benefit that

³¹ Cf. A. Gašpar – J. Garmaz, *The Corpus-based Study on the Impact of Religious Education on the Humanization of Man and Development of Religious Competence*, „Bogoslovni vestnik” 76 (2016) 2, pp. 417–431.

³² *Familiaris consortio* 5.

³³ *Familiaris consortio* 8.

³⁴ *Gratissimam sane* 16.

the Christian family is not left alone but may find strength in the relation with Jesus Christ. Marriage and the family, while remaining in the original relation to Jesus Christ, both receive the gift of love and unity coming directly from Him but also give it to all its members.

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